

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

4115

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Chaska Historical Marker

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number County Highway 61 near Edgehill Road not for publication N/A

city or town Chaska vicinity

state Minnesota code MN county Carver code 019 zip code 55318

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Britta L. Bloomberg 5/12/10
Signature of certifying official Britta L. Bloomberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date

State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

Erson Beal
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

JUL 6 2010

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
1		sites
		structure
		objects
2		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/Park

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/Park

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: NPS Rustic Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Stone

roof

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Landscape Architecture

Period of Significance

1938

Significant Dates

1938

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

See continuation sheet

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #_____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Site Development Unit of Minn. Dept. of
Transportation (Mn/DOT), St. Paul

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approx. 1.2 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

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	Zone	Easting	Northing																

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>Susan Granger, Scott Kelly, and Liz Morrison</u>		
organization	<u>Gemini Research</u>	date	<u>Nov. 2009</u>
street and number	<u>15 E. 9th Street</u>	telephone	<u>320-589-3846</u>
city or town	<u>Morris</u>	state	<u>MN</u>
		zip code	<u>56267</u>

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name	_____		
street & number	_____	telephone	_____
city or town	_____	state	_____
		zip code	_____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it contains a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., Washington, DC 20240.

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7. DESCRIPTION

The Chaska Historical Marker is a small, 1.2-acre wayside rest. It was built in 1938 and is located in a residential and rural setting on the northwestern side of former U.S. Highway 212 near Edgehill Road in the city of Chaska. Highway 212 was recently renamed County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 61. Chaska is a Carver County municipality on the western edge of the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

The historic center of the city of Chaska lies to the east and northeast. West and northwest of the wayside rest are newly-developing residential neighborhoods. South of the property, across former Highway 212, the land slopes down to the Chaska Unit of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge, which is visible from the wayside rest, occupies 600 acres of the flat, wooded floodplain of the Minnesota River and includes two marshy bodies of water, Chaska Lake and Chaska Marsh. The Minnesota River itself is about one mile south of the wayside rest.

The wayside rest was built by the Minnesota Department of Highways (MHD) to serve travelers on U.S. Highway 212 (now CSAH 61). The wayside rest was developed as part of a 2,100'-long MHD roadside development project with the wayside rest at its southwestern end. In addition to building the wayside rest, the roadside development project cleared and grubbed about nine acres of the Highway 212 right-of-way, contoured slopes and ditches, and screened a pre-existing, 2.5-acre MHD gravel pit located immediately north of the wayside rest. The roadside development project visually screened the pit from the highway and the wayside rest with a series of plantings, and created a curving entrance road into the gravel pit. The road is adjacent to the wayside rest. (The plants that screened the gravel pit were listed on the original construction plans as laurel willow trees (*Salix pentandra*), rosy Tartarian honeysuckle shrubs (*Lonicera tartarica rosea*), and Siberian pea shrubs (*Caragana arborescens*.) Of the 2,100'-long roadside development project, only the wayside rest retains design distinction and historic physical integrity. While the gravel pit's curving entrance road is extant, only some of the screen plantings remain. The former gravel pit is now occupied by a Carver County public works facility with a modern headquarters building.

Both the wayside rest and the associated Highway 212 landscaping were designed by prominent Minnesota landscape architect Arthur Richardson ("A. R.") Nichols, working in collaboration with highway engineer Harold E. Olson, who was chief of the MHD's Roadside Development Division. The wayside rest was built by the Minnesota Department of Highways. It appears to have been built closely to the original plans.

The Chaska Historical Marker has been a highway wayside rest since 1938. In 2009 Mn/DOT rehabilitated the property following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of

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Historic Properties, including the Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes. Original construction plans and four historical photos of the property guided the rehabilitation. Ownership of the marker was transferred to Carver County.

Summary of Principal Resources

The property includes two principal resources. They are a structure: a National Park Service Rustic Style combination stone historical marker and retaining wall; and a site: the wayside rest itself. See the accompanying map entitled "Sketch Map, Chaska Historical Marker, Chaska, Carver Co., MN."

Spatial Organization and Circulation

The wayside rest is a triangular parcel of land. The principal built feature is a historical marker which doubles as a retaining wall and which is set into the side of a fairly steep, wooded hill. Original plans specify contouring the earth to help the marker blend into its hillside setting and to create the flat picnic area in front of it. The hillside behind the marker-retaining wall was evidently used as a pasture shortly before the wayside rest was created.

The site has a curving 24'-wide pull-off drive lined with 600' of poured concrete curb. The drive has two access points on County Highway 61 that are about 170' apart. The curve of the drive creates a semi-circular island between the marker and the highway that is about 140' long by 49' deep and has historically been used for picnicking. The pull-off drive was originally gravel, but has been paved with bituminous since the 1960s. As the paving was periodically overlaid, the bituminous began to bury the face of the historic curb. By 2009, much of the curbing was intact but in poor condition. As part of the 2009 rehabilitation, Mn/DOT graded the drive to restore the historic curb depth of 6". Site drainage was corrected and two simple, rectangular catch basins were placed at the ends of the drive. Only about 30% of the original curving could be saved and about 70% was replaced following the original design. The drive was then surfaced with sand-coated bituminous.

Historically there was one pedestrian path on the site – a curving gravel walk located immediately adjacent to the front of the marker. The walk is about 5' wide and about 140' long. In 2009 the gravel was replaced with poured concrete and an ADA-compliant curb cut was added to the southern end of the walk.

Stone Marker and Retaining Wall

The focal point of the site is a gently curving, approximately 80'-long structure, built against the hillside, that serves as a combination historical marker and retaining wall. It was built of striated gray Mifflin limestone laid in a random ashlar pattern. The stone was probably quarried locally, judging by

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outcroppings of similar limestone present in the area. The use of local materials is also characteristic of the National Park Service Rustic Style. The masonry work displays a high level of craftsmanship.

The marker-retaining wall has a symmetrical tripartite design with a 10'8"-long, stepped central shaft flanked by 34'6"-long wings. The shaft is about 11'6" tall and 18" thick. The wing walls are about 4' tall and 18" thick. The outer 19' of each wing is stepped forward about 3'. Plans indicate that the footing of the marker-retaining wall is about 4' thick beneath the ground at its midpoint.

By 2009, the stone structure was in very poor condition due to weathering, poor drainage, and lack of maintenance. Most mortar joints were failing and many pieces of limestone were broken, in part due to the fact that Mifflin limestone is prone to delaminating. A significant number of stones had fallen off, many of which had been stored by Mn/DOT in anticipation of the marker's eventual repair. In 2009 Mn/DOT corrected the drainage and extensively rehabilitated the structure. When replacing the damaged and missing stones, the contractor used as many of the original stones as possible. In the end, about 25% to 30% of the stone used on visible faces of the structure was new. The entire structure was tuck-pointed and the masonry cleaned.

Two low benches flank the central shaft. They have 6' x 16" poured concrete seats that rest on four, squat mortared limestone bases built over concrete footings. Both bench seats and one of the limestone bases were missing by 1998. In 2009 Mn/DOT rehabilitated the benches as per original plans and early photos, created new poured concrete slab seats and replaced pieces of deteriorated limestone as needed.

Directly in front of the central shaft is a small, slightly-elevated flagstone plaza on a poured concrete footing. The plaza visually emphasizes the central shaft, and provides a low platform on which to stand to read the marker text. By 1998 the plaza was in very poor condition. It was rehabilitated in 2009 using historical plans and photos.

The central shaft has a rectangular niche in which is mounted a bronze plaque surrounded by a frame of red brick. By 2009 the plaque had been bent and damaged with graffiti. Mn/DOT had the plaque removed, refurbished, and reinstalled. The text reads: "Little Rapids Fur Post. By 1804 Jean B. Faribault was trading in furs for the Northwest Company near the 'Little Rapids' of the Minnesota River, 5 miles south of this point, and in this vicinity. His fur post of 1824 on the site of Chaska became the nucleus of the first Catholic mission in Carver County under Father Ravous [sic Ravoux]." At the bottom corners of the plaque are the seals of the Minnesota Department of Highways and the Minnesota Historical Society.

Neither the bronze plaque nor its red brick surround (which helps the plaque fit into the rectangular niche) were placed in the marker niche in 1938, but instead were installed a few years later, presumably in the early 1940s. As specified in Nichols' plans, the first plaque installed in the niche was a 3' x 5'

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black and white steel sign which was slightly larger than the early 1940s bronze plaque and therefore needed no brick surround. The steel sign was one of a series of basically identical historical markers placed throughout the state in an early highway historical marker program. (See Section 8 for more information.) Prior to being placed in the marker niche in 1938, the steel sign had been standing along the side of Highway 212 about 1,500' northeast of the wayside rest.

Other Structures and Furnishings

One simple wooden picnic table was typically used at the site. The original picnic table had a Rustic style design with peeled logs supporting a table top and bench seats that were made of wooden planks. An historical photo from ca. 1950 shows the table still in place. (See Fig. 3.) The original table design was one commonly used by the MHD in its Depression-era wayside rests. It was likely built for the MHD Roadside Development Division by the National Youth Administration (NYA) at one of its vocational training centers in Minnesota. By May 1938 the NYA had already built 207 Rustic style tables for the Roadside Development Division under this arrangement ("An Appraisal" 1938: 13).

Around the 1960s the MHD added a 7' x 8' poured concrete pad to the central island and placed the picnic table on the pad. In 2009 Mn/DOT removed the 1960s pad and replaced it with a new 12' x 15' poured concrete pad, accessed via a new 5' x 14' ADA-compliant sidewalk. An ADA-compliant picnic table with a simple, historically-compatible design was anchored to the pad.

The site contains no other furnishings. According to a highway department document, in 1961 the site had a well water pump, two portable picnic tables, two picnic fireplaces (presumably simple metal picnic grills), and two refuse containers (presumably two approximately 55-gallon metal drums) ("Roadside Development" 1961). The picnic grills and well water pump were removed in the 1970s or 1980s.

Vegetation

A. R. Nichols' plans for the wayside rest, the adjacent gravel pit, and associated Highway 212 roadside landscaping call for preserving existing trees and shrubs that included, according to the plans, alder (*Alnus* spp.), ash (*Fraxinus* spp.), basswood (*Tilia americana*), elm (e.g., *Ulmus* spp.), hickory (*Carya* spp.), maple (*Acer* spp.), oak (*Quercus* spp.), poplar (*Populus* spp.), and sumac (*Rhus glabra*).

Nichols' plans specify planting an additional 37 trees and 398 shrubs along the 2,100' roadside project. The plants are typical of those used by the MHD Roadside Development Division on other roadside projects. Such plants were typically very hardy, required little maintenance, and blended with surrounding vegetation. (In some cases Nichols directed that trees and shrubs be transplanted from surrounding land.) Nichols' choice of plantings typically emphasized markers and other built structures,

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and/or helped them blend with their setting. The plantings often screened undesirable scenes and/or framed desirable views.

Nichols' plans specify that 13 American elms (*Ulmus americana*) and 250 smooth sumac shrubs (*Rhus glabra*) be planted on the hillside behind the historical marker, and that 52 deciduous Chinese matrimony vines (*Kycium chinense*) be planted immediately behind the stone structure to drape over it.

The fate of the 1938 elms, sumac, and vines remains a mystery. Hand-written "final quantity" notations on the construction plans suggest that all were indeed supplied, but a ca. 1950 photo of the wayside rest does not show these plants. (Fig. 3.) Instead, the photo shows about 13 young Colorado spruce trees (*Picea pungens*) scattered on the hillside behind the marker (in place of the elms on the plans), and no evidence of the sumac or vines. It is possible that the specified plants were installed as planned but either eaten by deer or succumbed to drought during the hot, dry summer of 1938 (or the even drier summers of 1939 and 1940). The wayside rest was then evidently replanted with the 13 spruce, which are fairly resistant to both deer browsing and drought.

Today the hillside behind the marker is thickly wooded with numerous green ash and other deciduous trees and shrubs, including invasive buckthorn. In 2009 the 13 Colorado spruce were still standing but in deteriorating health. As part of the 2009 rehabilitation, Mn/DOT removed all but about four of the historic spruce, and planted 13 Black Hills spruce (*Picea glauca* var. *densata*) on the hillside using the ca. 1950 photo (Fig. 3) as a guide. Before planting the spruce, Mn/DOT cleared volunteer trees and shrubs from the area immediately behind the marker.

The wayside rest's semi-circular island is planted with turf grass installed during the 2009 rehabilitation to replace the existing turf. Nichols' plans specify a turf mixture of Kentucky blue grass (*Poa pratensis*), red top or creeping bentgrass (*Agrostis palustris*), Alsike clover (*Trifolium hybridum*), and domestic rye grass (*Lolium perenne*). The island was shaded until ca. 2006 by two large maple trees that are not specified in the original plans, but appear as young trees in the ca. 1950 photo. (Fig. 3.) The maples were removed ca. 2006. In 2009 Mn/DOT planted two sugar maples (*Acer saccharum* 'Green Mountain') to replace the historic maples.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architect/Builder, Continued

Nichols, Arthur Richardson (Landscape Architect)
Olson, Harold E. (Engineer)
Minnesota Department of Highways (Builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Chaska Historical Marker, a highway wayside rest built in 1938, is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C, design significance, in the area of Landscape Architecture. The property meets Criteria Consideration F, a commemorative property whose design quality has invested it with its own historical significance. The property is an example of the distinctive and well-constructed wayside rests developed by the Minnesota Department of Highways (MHD) Roadside Development Division during its formative years, the 1930s and early 1940s, in response to society's changing transportation priorities. The property exemplifies the design work of prominent Minnesota landscape architect A. R. Nichols and is an excellent example of Nichols' adaptation of the National Park Service Rustic Style to a highway wayside rest. There are two contributing resources, and the property is significant on a statewide level.

Development of the Wayside Rest

With its western terminus at Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming and its eastern terminus in the Twin Cities, Highway 212 had become a significant tourist route by the late 1930s. Plans for the 2,100'-long MHD roadside project that included the wayside rest were drawn in 1937 and approved by MHD officials in February 1938. The project was built during the 1938 construction season. The Roadside Development Division's 1938 *Annual Report* noted: "The location of this stretch of highway is along the base of a steep hill with steep slopes on one side and flat river bottom on the other side. This project involves cleanup along the highway, erection and perpetuation of an historical marker, masonry retaining wall, turnout drive, screen planting of an old gravel pit, ornamental planting and flattening of backslopes" (*Annual Report* 1938: 4).

The Chaska project was unusual in that the construction labor was provided by the highway department itself, rather than by a federal New Deal work-relief agency such as the National Youth Administration (NYA) or the Works Progress Administration (WPA). In plan and appearance, however, the Chaska project is nearly identical to the Roadside Development Division's work-relief projects, and it is one of only a few MHD wayside rests of the period not built with New Deal labor. It is likely that the Chaska project was planned as work-relief project but for some reason (perhaps unavailability of funding or lack of a sufficient number of qualified workers) a federal relief partnership was not formed.

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The State of Minnesota contributed half of the project costs while the federal government paid the rest. The city of Chaska probably maintained the new wayside rest after it was built. (It was standard practice for a local government to assume maintenance if an MHD wayside rest was built within municipal limits.)

The Property's Significance to Roadside Development in Minnesota

The Chaska Historical Marker is an excellent representative example of the Minnesota Department of Highways' first large-scale program to construct public roadside amenities, and a fine illustration of how the MHD's Roadside Development Division fulfilled its early goals of improving highway safety and aesthetics and enhancing the public's traveling experience.

The Minnesota Department of Highways formed the Roadside Development Division in 1932, a time when highway building was a national imperative, highway safety was becoming increasingly important, the lucrative automobile tourism industry was growing, and the new field of "roadside development" was emerging in response to these new priorities. Highway construction, safety improvements, and roadside development work were stimulated by an infusion of federal funds during the New Deal (1933-1943), both in Minnesota and nationwide.

Minnesota's first system of state (i.e., "trunk") highways was established by voters in 1920. (This was four years after the federal government began to contribute to the cost of road-building in the states following passage of the 1916 Federal Aid Highway Act.) Minnesota's trunk highways comprised 70 numbered routes – containing 7,000 miles of roadway – that were designed to link all county seats and major population centers. The Minnesota Department of Highways was established in modern form soon thereafter, in 1925.

The MHD's first generation of wayside rests, including the Chaska Historical Marker, was created as the new trunk highway system was being built. Highway 212 through Chaska had only been paved for nine years when the wayside rest was constructed. The road had been acquired by the MHD when the state system was established in 1920, was graded and surfaced with gravel in 1923, and was paved with concrete in 1929. This section of road became a U.S. Highway (in addition to its state highway status) ca. 1934.

Early Roadside Development. By 1929 the MHD had begun some roadside development activities including preserving native trees along roadsides, collaborating with the state forest service to plant new trees, and seeding and sodding ditches and slopes, but these efforts remained small. Early roadside development champions within the MHD included officials such as S. Rex Green (Engineer of Lands and Right-of-Way), O. L. Kipp (Construction Engineer), and Walter F. Rosenwald (Maintenance Engineer), many of whom were ardent conservationists.

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On the national level, the U.S. Bureau of Roads (precursor of the Federal Highway Administration) began to formally promote roadside development in the 1920s. In 1928 the Bureau first allowed Federal Aid highway funds to be used for roadside planting. In 1933 the federal government began requiring that one-half of one percent of all federal highway funds be spent on roadside development. The requirement was increased to one percent the following year. In 1934 the Bureau of Roads advised states to give roadside landscaping a "regular place in highway construction" (Simonson and Royall 1934: 3).

Harold E. Olson became the director of Minnesota's new Roadside Development Division when it was founded in 1932 and led the division as director for 31 years. Olson was joined almost immediately by accomplished Minnesota landscape architect A. R. Nichols whose private practice was lagging during the Depression. As the Division's consulting landscape architect, Nichols worked with Olson to design most major MHD roadside development projects from ca. 1932 through the early 1940s.

In 1932 Olson organized Minnesota's first Conference on Roadside Development, a meeting that drew representatives from the MHD, American Legion, State Nurseman's Association, Izaak Walton League, Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs, American Society of Landscape Architects (represented by Nichols), League of Minnesota Municipalities, Minnesota Department of Conservation, and Minneapolis Park Board.

Road Safety. Roadside development emerged within a climate of increasing concern with highway safety. Minnesota experienced an alarming increase in traffic accidents in the 1920s as the number of cars sky-rocketed and as traffic speeds increased. The MHD was an organizer of the Minnesota Safety Council, established in 1928, and a key participant in the first Governor's Safety Conference, which was a 1934 event attended by 800 representatives from state agencies, automobile clubs, local governments, railroad and bus companies, and business and civic groups.

Automobile Tourism. The 1920s and early 1930s also saw the growth of Minnesota's new automobile-based tourism industry. Planners and politicians recognized that improving the appearance and safety of state highways, as well as adding roadside amenities, were critical to supporting state tourism. By 1933 Minnesota ranked third in the nation in tourist travel behind California and Florida, with an estimated 800,000 visitors spending \$32 million in the state (Olson 1933:1). During the summer of 1938, approximately one million people – 25 percent of whom lived out of state – visited Minnesota state parks. By 1938 tourism was Minnesota's third most profitable industry. After the Depression, recreational travel increased even further when the 40-hour work week became common, giving people more leisure time for travel.

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The flood of new travelers placed serious demands on the highway system, and without gas stations, convenience stores, and fast food restaurants, early travelers found few safe and pleasant places to find drinking water, have a picnic lunch, or use a restroom. Community groups responded in the 1920s by "beautifying" local roads and building picnic areas and camp grounds to attract and serve tourists. Interest groups and local officials urged state government to support recreational travel. Among those groups were the American Automobile Association (AAA) (founded in 1902), Minnesota's Ten Thousand Lakes of Minnesota Association (founded in 1918), and automobile "trail blazing" groups like the Minnesota Scenic Highway Association (founded in 1916).

In addition to creating the MHD Roadside Development Division, state government also established the Minnesota Bureau of Tourism (1931), which was placed under the auspices of the Department of Conservation, now the Department of Natural Resources. Through the years the Roadside Development Division worked closely with the Tourism Bureau, as well as with the Department of Conservation's Divisions of State Parks and Forestry.

A 1934 federal Bureau of Roads publication emphasized the link between roadside development and tourism by noting: "For those who desire a direct return on every [roadside development] investment, there is the tourist traffic to be considered. This traffic will seek the routes of greatest beauty, as it always has been in the past, and leave money behind in payment for gasoline, meals, lodgings, garage services, and incidental expenditures" (Simonson and Royall 1934: 3).

Roadside Development Theory and Practice. A basic charge of the MHD Roadside Development Division was to improve the safety and appearance of Minnesota's new trunk highways. The system was largely built over a set of preexisting local roads of varying condition. Many roads were hazardous (given their traffic) with narrow driving lanes, blind curves, encroaching vegetation, steep ditches, and collapsing and eroding embankments. The Division's strategies included:

- building roads with a "balance of safety, good construction, economical maintenance, and natural beauty" (Nichols 1937:169)
- building roads that were in harmony with surrounding views, topography, and vegetation
- making use of "existing scenic advantages," especially for new highway routes used by recreational traffic
- acquiring generous rights-of-way
- sculpting the roadside with natural contours to reduce erosion and improve safety and appearance
- flattening slopes to allow cars to safely leave the road in emergencies
- clearing vegetation to increase visibility
- saving vegetation to enhance a road's scenic qualities
- saving topsoil during road construction for use in planting
- installing plants to control erosion, erase road construction scars, and block wind and blowing snow

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- installing plants to enhance pleasant views, screen undesirable views, and blend a highway into its setting
- landscaping the approaches to bridges
- restricting billboards along highways
- building wayside rests, scenic overlooks, parking concourses, picnic areas, historical marker sites, and other areas “where the public can stop for rest and enjoyment” (Nichols 1937: 169)
- building a matching set of Rustic style limestone entrance markers (i.e., welcome signs), designed by A. R. Nichols, and placed along the state border on key recreational travel routes

Many of the goals and strategies articulated by roadside development pioneers at the state and federal level still influence state and federal highway planning today. (For many years the Roadside Development Division was also responsible for mowing and other roadside landscape maintenance.)

Wayside Rests. The wayside rests were the centerpieces of the MHD roadside development program and the most well-known of its accomplishments. Nichols wrote in 1940, “It is becoming more and more imperative to provide turnouts, overlooks, and roadside parking areas where the tourist may rest and enjoy the scenery with full degree of safety. . . . These roadside areas when carefully planned and developed can be convenient, restful, and impressive. They become an asset to the traveling public” (Nichols 1940: 4).

Many of the first MHD wayside rests, like the Chaska Historical Marker, included a small parking area so travelers could safely pull off the road, a place for a picnic meal, and a source of drinking water. Some wayside rests had privies, multiple picnic areas, and looping walking trails to encourage drivers to stretch their legs and experience beautiful natural settings. Some featured a scenic overlook wall, or a fishing pier, or a marker that interpreted local history or geography to make traveling more enjoyable and informative. While most early wayside rests were designed in the Rustic style, each was different as the designers responded to local conditions and assets.

Many of the first MHD wayside rests, like at Chaska, had an historical marker as a focal point. In 1929 the MHD Roadside Development Division and the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) established the state's first highway marking program. At first the program's standard 3' x 5' steel markers were placed on the “edges of the right-of-way, parallel with the highway.” Sometimes the MHD widened the shoulder “to permit a car to draw out of the line of moving traffic and stop” to read the marker. At some sites, “a double line of white stones [was] used to form an approach to the sign [that] makes the spot exceedingly attractive” (Babcock 1932: 381-382). Beginning in 1932, the markers were accompanied by two warning signs reading “Historic Site Ahead.”

About 108 of the steel historical markers were erected in the 1930s. Some of the marker sites were developed into wayside rests as the MHD worked to eliminate a “traffic hazard by [moving] these

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markers back from the roadway and providing a suitable turnout which allows the public to park off of the highway while reading the historic legend” (“An Appraisal” 1938: 13). Chaska Historical Marker is a good example of a site where a larger wayside rest was developed around one of the earlier steel markers. In many cases the existing steel sign was reused – for example placed in a new stone marker niche – and then replaced by a more expensive and permanent bronze plaque as funding allowed. In most cases the text of the bronze plaques was identical to the steel marker it replaced.

The MHD built more than 70 wayside rests and related properties in 1933-1942. The Chaska Historical Marker is a well-preserved and typical example of the Division's smaller Depression-era wayside rests. In 1998, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) conducted a statewide inventory of pre-1960 roadside development amenities that retained standing structures and were still in state ownership. The study found the Chaska Historical Marker to be one of the most intact of more than 100 properties surveyed (Granger et al. 1998).

The Property's Design Significance

Thanks in large part to New Deal funding, the MHD's first collection of state highway wayside rests was designed by a talented landscape architect and built with the high-quality craftsmanship characteristic of much of the state's Depression-era federal-relief construction. Most of the properties were designed in the then-popular National Park Service Rustic Style (also used in Minnesota state parks), which helped the man-made structures blend with their surroundings and which showcased local stone and other indigenous materials.

The Chaska Historical Marker is an excellent and intact example of the application of the National Park Service Rustic Style to a highway wayside rest. It displays the site-appropriate massing, high-quality craftsmanship, labor-intensive construction techniques, and distinctive use of local materials that are characteristic of the style.

The Chaska property is also an excellent and well-preserved example of the roadside development work of A. R. Nichols. Nichols designed dozens of MHD wayside rests with historical markers, scenic overlook walls, council rings, stone picnic structures, and looping foot trails. The basic spatial arrangement of the Chaska property is typical of his small wayside rests. While each of his historical markers is unique, they share common design elements including native stone construction. Many, like the structure at Chaska, display a symmetrical arrangement of central rectangular shaft flanked by low wing walls. The shaft usually contains a rectangular metal plaque set into a niche, with the plaque sometimes outlined with decorative brick or stonework. Most markers have symmetrically placed, low backless stone or concrete benches. Only a few of the markers, like that at Chaska, double as retaining walls. Some are free-standing, while others are incorporated into raised stone terraces, the most elaborate of which resemble small outdoors rooms with stone floors and low walls. Most of Nichols'

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structures are framed by hardy trees and shrubs, and he often used evergreens such as red cedars or spruce for year-round interest.

Arthur R. Nichols. Arthur R. Nichols (1880-1970) was a prominent Minnesota landscape architect who served from 1932 to about 1941 as the first consulting landscape architect for the MHD and its Roadside Development Division. Through this work Nichols strongly influenced the course of roadside development in Minnesota and became known nationally. Nichols was trained as both a civil engineer and a landscape architect, unlike many in his position nationwide who had backgrounds in estate and garden planning.

Nichols was originally from Massachusetts. He studied engineering, architecture, and landscape design at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and in 1902 was the first person to graduate from MIT's newly-created landscape architecture program. During his early career he prepared plans for Monument Valley Park in Colorado Springs while working in the office of New York City landscape architect Charles W. Leavitt, Jr. In 1909 Nichols and fellow Leavitt designer Anthony Morell (1875-1924) formed a partnership and moved to Minnesota. Morell and Nichols had become acquainted with Minnesota while working for Leavitt on the landscaping of "Glensheen," Chester A. Congdon's mansion in Duluth.

Morell and Nichols' park designs in Minnesota included extensive work in Duluth, as well as in cities such as Minneapolis, Stillwater, Lake City, Thief River Falls, and Albert Lea. In 1926, after Anthony Morell's death at age 49, the firm designed scenic roadways in Glacier National Park, as well as the grounds of the popular Glacier Park Hotel. During the Depression, Nichols was major author of the State of Minnesota's first comprehensive state park planning document, the Minnesota State Park and Recreational Area Plan (March 1939), a New Deal-funded project. Nichols also designed post-World War II improvements for many of Minnesota's state parks.

Nichols was one of Minnesota's most prolific landscape architects and played a leading role in establishing the profession in the state. He designed numerous campuses, private estates, cemeteries, parks, and urban master plans. During decades of consulting for the State of Minnesota, he planned dozens of hospitals, prisons, schools, parks, and other facilities. For the University of Minnesota, he designed projects on at least five separate campuses between 1910 and 1952. Nichols redesigned the Minnesota State Capitol Approach in 1944-1950. After a long career, he retired in 1960 at the age of 80.

Harold E. Olson. Harold E. Olson had been working for the state highway department for ten years when, in 1932, he organized the MHD's new Roadside Development Division. During the Depression, Olson helped arrange many partnerships between the MHD and New Deal agencies including the National Youth Administration, the Works Progress Administration, and the Civilian Conservation

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Corps. Olson also worked closely with staff from other federal agencies such as the National Park Service, and with state and local officials.

Like A. R. Nichols, Olson was prominent in the roadside development movement nationally. He served as the Roadside Development Division's primary ambassador to state and national conservation groups; civic, tourism, and development associations; and various public agencies concerned with scenic highway construction and roadside improvement. Beginning in 1938, Olson and Nichols were leaders in the multi-state effort to establish the Mississippi River Parkway, now called the Great River Road, which follows the Mississippi River from its headwaters in northern Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico.

Olson retired from the Roadside Development Division in 1963 and continued to work with the MHD until January 1968. (The dates of Olson's birth and death have not been established.)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Chaska Historical Marker, built in 1938, is significant as a well-preserved representative of the early roadside development work of the Minnesota Department of Highways and a prime example of the Roadside Development Division's efforts to enhance highway safety and appearance and to support Minnesota's developing auto-tourism industry. The property is also an excellent illustration of the National Park Service Rustic Style as applied to a highway wayside rest and a well-preserved remnant of the roadside development work of pioneering Minnesota landscape architect Arthur R. Nichols.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA, CONTINUED

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is shown by the solid black line on the accompanying map entitled "Sketch Map, Chaska Historical Marker, Chaska, Carver Co., MN." This map was drawn using a Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) Right-of-Way Map and a Mn/DOT aerial photo taken in 2005.

The nominated property is located in the SE 1/4 of Section 8, Township 115N, Range 23W. The western boundary, which is about 372' long, follows the centerline of Section 8, T115N, R23W. (This line was the western limit of the city of Chaska in 1938 when the property was developed.) The northern boundary of the nominated property follows the southern curblineline of the entrance drive of the adjacent Carver County Public Works facility (as shown). The eastern boundary is a 415'-long line drawn 4' east of the concrete curbing on the eastern side of the island. The southern boundary is perpendicular with the eastern boundary (as shown).

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated property conforms to the historical boundary of the wayside rest as it was envisioned by the Minnesota Department of Highways in original construction plans. The property was built as part of the landscaping of a 2,100'-long section of highway right-of-way. Only the wayside rest retains design distinction and historic physical integrity. The rest of the right-of-way is excluded from the nominated property.

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Fig. 1. Chaska Historical Marker nearing completion (oblique view), ca. 1938, facing west (photo by W. G. Klett)

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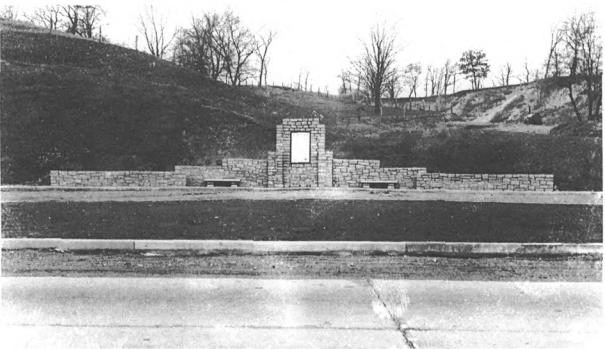


Fig. 2. Chaska Historical Marker nearing completion (front view), ca. 1938, facing northwest (photo by W. G. Klett)

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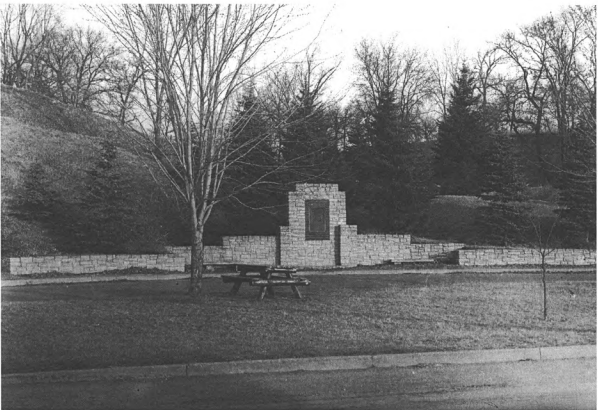


Fig. 3. Chaska Historical Marker, ca. 1950, facing northwest (photo by Minnesota Dept. of Highways)

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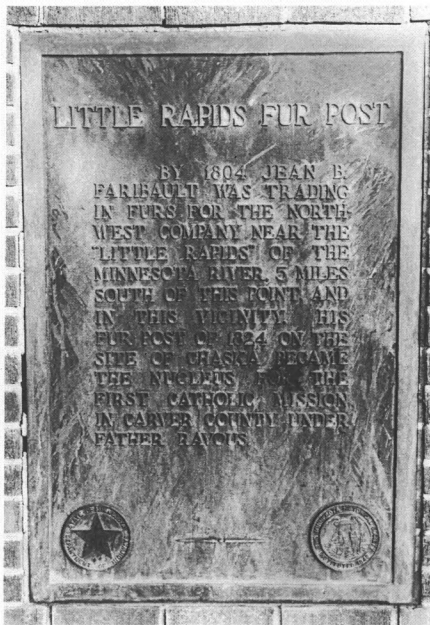


Fig. 4. Chaska Historical Marker, bronze marker detail, ca. 1950, facing northwest (photo by Minnesota Dept. of Highways)

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Figure 2. Chaska Historical Marker nearing completion (front view), ca. 1938, facing northwest (photo by W.G. Klett)

Figure 3. Chaska Historical Marker, ca. 1950 facing northwest (photo by Minnesota Department of Highways)

Figure 4. Chaska Historical Marker, bronze marker detail, ca. 1950, facing northwest (photo by Minnesota Department of Highways)

Sketch Map
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 Chaska, Carver Co., MN

